

ORD-1384-73

13 March 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: C/IP&amp;A/ORD

SUBJECT : Rosemary Brown's Conversations with the Dead

1. This memorandum is a summary of significant sections of Rosemary Brown's book Unfinished Symphonies: Voices from the Beyond (New York, William Morrow and Co., 1971). Although I have ordered the Philips recording of some of her performances this has to be imported from Europe and has not yet arrived.

2. Rosemary Brown has the undoubted ability to compose music in the styles of classical composers and to perform the music she has composed. This ability is not unique to Rosemary Brown. While in these days of extensive formal education it is customary that persons able to compose music in a variety of styles will have had some specific training in the subject, the absence of such formal training does not seem remarkable in the light of numerous historic instances of self-taught musicians. What is remarkable about Rosemary Brown is her claim that these compositions are not her own but have been dictated to her 'from the beyond' by the living spirits of deceased famous composers.

3. Mrs. Brown's claim should be understood in the light of her own family background in spiritualism; at the age of seven Rosemary was 'already accustomed to seeing the spirits of the so-called dead' (p. 13) and many of the assertions she makes of the beyond (e.g., the healing power of spirits) are consistent with what she would have learned at the spiritualistic meetings she attended. Mrs. Brown's most frequent communicator is (the spirit of) Franz Liszt who not only dictates music to her but advises her on the prices of bunches of bananas (pp. 100-101) when the price tag is hidden from view. Although spirits have little linguistic difficulty (Bach has learned English), they cannot readily pick up television programs.

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4. Clearly it does not follow from the presumptive fact that Mrs. Brown hears voices and sees other manifestations of spirits that there are (in an objective sense) such spirits. Schizophrenics and others (e.g., Joan of Arc) have had similar perceptions that have not been amenable to intersubjective verification. Nothing revealed by the spirits to Mrs. Brown and reported in her book appears to be sufficiently remarkable in depth of detail to require me to accept Mrs. Brown's explanation of spiritual origin of these messages as the only plausible explanation.

5. At the present state of science there is no algorithm to determine whether or not a particular musical composition is in the style of Bach (for example). But even if there were such an algorithm it would not be decisive in the present instance because if Bach is adventuresome enough to have learned English, I see no reason why he might not today be composing music in almost any style.

6. Mrs. Brown on occasion communicates with non-musicians. Einstein, in particular, has revealed to her his new equation: "S(Q)R = Infinity". I append a xerox copy of Einstein's reported message. If you think the message really originates from Einstein, you are likely to be impressed with Mrs. Brown's abilities. If you think Einstein never would have come up with the quoted discourse, you are likely to dismiss Mrs. Brown, notwithstanding the favorable introduction to her book by the Bishop of Southwark who has his own reasons for believing in life after death.

SIGNED

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IP&A/ORD

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Attachment:  
As stated

Distribution:  
Original - Addressee w/att  
✓ - LS/ORD [REDACTED]  
1 - MK w/att [REDACTED]  
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